

**IOPF2010-4004**

## **INNOVATIONS IN TESTING OF DEEP WATER INSULATION**

**Marcus Heydrich**  
ShawCor  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

**Bo Xu**  
ShawCor  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

**Raphael Moscarello**  
Bredero Shaw  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

**Sanjay Shah**  
ShawCor  
Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada

**Peter Jackson**  
ShawCor  
Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada

**Stephen Edmondson**  
ShawCor  
Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada

### **ABSTRACT**

Insulation is commonly applied to offshore pipelines to ensure the flow of hydrocarbons at elevated temperatures. The thermal properties of the insulation can be readily modeled; however, the performance of the insulation needs to be verified under conditions similar to those encountered in deepwater service. Autoclave testing of individual materials can be conducted but this is not representative of the conditions that the materials see in service. The insulation is typically present in layers, and not every layer is exposed to the same environment. Simulated service testing, where a full size pipe is exposed to a water pressure equivalent to that it will see in deepwater service load, is typically used to verify the performance of the insulation.

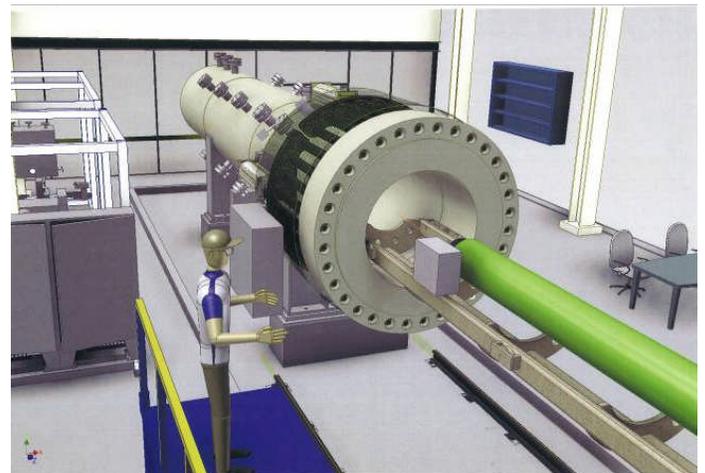
In this paper, recent developments in simulated service testing, including the design of a more advanced Simulated Service Vessel (SSV) will be presented. The verification and prediction of the performance of insulation systems will also be described.

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the development and qualification of insulation systems for subsea oil and gas pipelines it is important to understand and quantify the behavior of the insulation under service conditions experienced in subsea environments. ShawCor's Simulated Service Vessel (SSV) is a key part of a new state of the art facility designed to do just this.

This pressure vessel will simulate service conditions experienced by insulated subsea systems such as linepipe, field joints and, flexible pipe by applying pressure to water

surrounding these systems while controlling the temperature inside the pipe. By measuring the heat flow, thermal



conductivity and compressive creep of the insulating material, both the thermal efficiency and depth rating capabilities of the insulation can be confirmed. This data will also be used to verify design of the system.

## NOMENCLATURE

$\alpha$	– Thermal expansion coefficient
$c_p$	- Heat capacity
$E$	– Young's modulus
$h$	- Convection heat transfer coefficient
$k$	– Thermal conductivity
$\varepsilon$	- Strain
$\nu$	- Poisson's Ratio
$\sigma$	– Stress
$r$	- Radius
$r_i$	– Inner radius
$r_o$	– Outer radius
$R$	- Radius
$t$	– time
$T$	– Temperature
$T_{op}$	– Operation temperature
$T_{condition}$	– Temperature condition
$u$	– Radial displacement
$U$	– U value
$w$	– Axial displacement
$r, \theta, z$	- coordinates

## BACKGROUND

From both performance and safety aspects, the need for a precise understanding and determination of the service capability of insulated oil and gas subsea pipelines is essential. The increasingly high pressure and temperature performance demanded by the industry due to deeper drilling and deployment makes it ever more important that the performance limitations of insulated subsea pipelines are fully known.

## EXISTING TECHNOLOGY

The existing ShawCor SSV installed in Calgary, Canada was designed based on similar systems used in the late 1990s. This oil heated system utilizes a closed loop internal cooling coil to control outside water temperature. The system uses two heat flux (HF) belts circumferentially mounted to measure heat flow through the insulation system with each belt containing three HF sensors and four temperature sensors at the surface of the insulation. Six Linear Variable Differential Transformer (LVDTs) are strategically located throughout the vessel to measure compressive creep during the simulated service test.

The current SSV is limited to a pipe length of 1.83 m (6'), with outside pipe diameter including insulation of 356 mm (14") and minimum inside diameter of 125 mm (4.9"). The test pipe can be subjected to hydrostatic pressure of 280 bar with a maximum internal temperature of 160°C (320°F). Due to the increasing demand for higher temperature, large diameter offshore pipelines, ShawCor has decided to develop a larger, state of the art, 80 tonne SSV, which will be installed in Toronto, Canada. The existing Calgary vessel will then be used for long term material characterizations.

## NEW SHAWCOR SSV

The new ShawCor SSV allows for an accurate assessment of the performance capability of an insulated pipe system under precisely controlled conditions of temperature and pressure. The SSV is fundamentally a large cylindrical autoclave which can accommodate a 6 meter (20') length of the insulated pipe or structure to be evaluated.

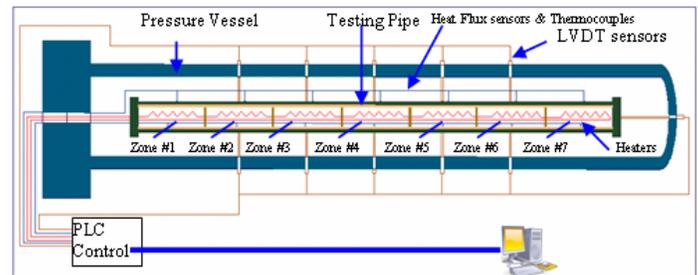
A thermally insulated sample is mounted in the vessel which is instrumented with the following: displacement transducers to measure diametrical change under hydrostatic load; thermal sensors for temperature measurement; and, heat flux sensors to determine the heat loss from the system. Once thermal equilibrium has been established, the vessel is pressurized and held at the required pressure for the duration of the test. The pressure is increased in specific increments to assess the immediate and long term response of insulation properties to changes in pressure at a specific operating temperature which is set by internally heating the test pipe.

Changes in compressive creep and heat flow are measured over time. U-value of the system can be calculated and compared with the design assumptions for the given pressure and temperature field.

## INSTRUMENTATION SYSTEM

To obtain the desired measurements, the measurement and control system in the new SSV facility are built to have features as shown in the following schematic. The steel pipe is heated with a seven-zone electrical heater, controlled by thermocouples in each zone. The following parameters are monitored:

- water temperature
- temperature of the insulation coating surface
- heat flux in the radial direction at different zones
- radial displacement using LVDT sensors
- power consumption in each zone

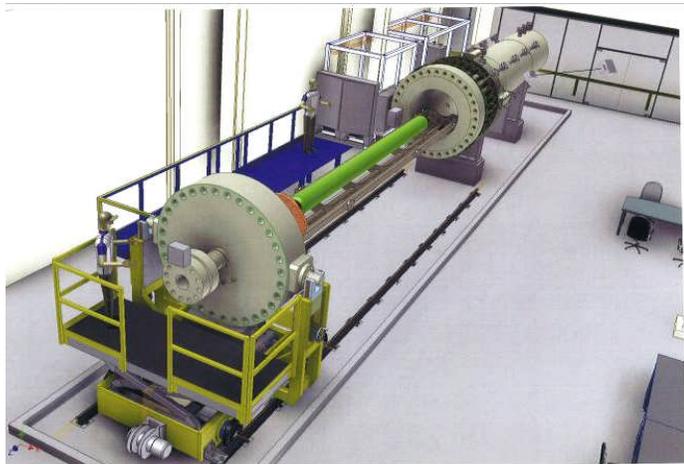


The system continuously monitors and records the measurements during the test period. The multi-zone controls and multi-point measurements of this system provide integrity testing of the insulation coating performance under the defined testing conditions.

**UNIQUE TESTING CAPABILITIES**

To accommodate market requirements trending towards deep and ultra deep development opportunities and higher oil transportation temperatures, the new ShawCor SSV has been designed to test to an equivalent water depth up to 3,000 m (9,842') at an internal pipe temperature of up to 180°C (356°F).

<u>Capability/Property</u>	<u>Specification</u>
Minimum Test Pressure	25 bar (± 2)
Maximum Test Pressure	300 bar (± 5)
Chilled Water Temperature Inside Pressure Vessel	4°C (40°F) (± 2)
Internal Temperature	20°C – 180°C (68°F – 356°F)
Sample Length	6 m (18') max
Vessel ID	1.2m (48'")
Number of Pipe Samples	one pipe
Pipe Inside Diameter	95 mm - 660 mm (4" - 26'")
Pipe Outside Diameter (includes insulation)	145 mm - 810 mm (6" - 32'")
Coating Thermal Conductivity	0.1- 0.3 W/m K (0.06 – 0.17 BTU / ft hr F)
Overall Heat Transfer Coefficient (U)	1.5 - 6 W/m <sup>2</sup> K (0.3 – 1.1 BTU / ft <sup>2</sup> hr F)



Testing is designed to accommodate the exact dimensions of the pipe (up to 26" ID) that will be put into service so that clients will accurately know the true representative thermal performance of their installed pipe. The vessel also has the ability to test both the field joint and the main line insulation.

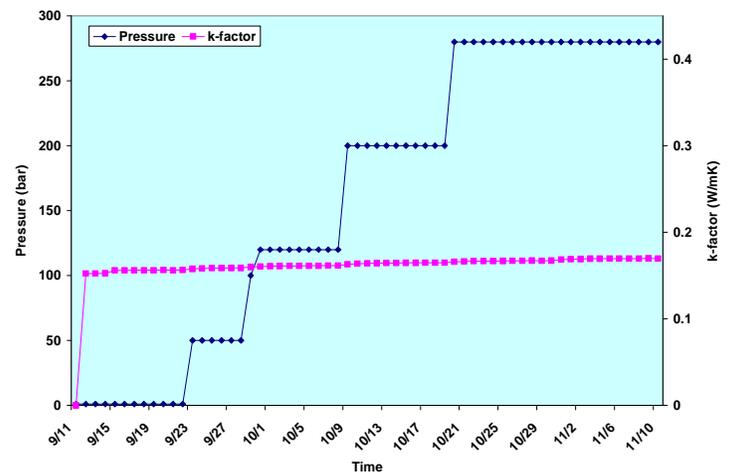
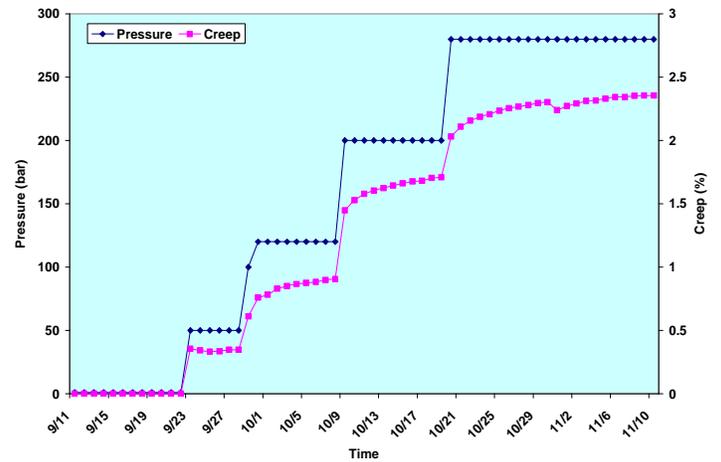
As well, the SSV has the capability to compare the performance of three insulation coatings simultaneously, with multiple measurements for each coating.

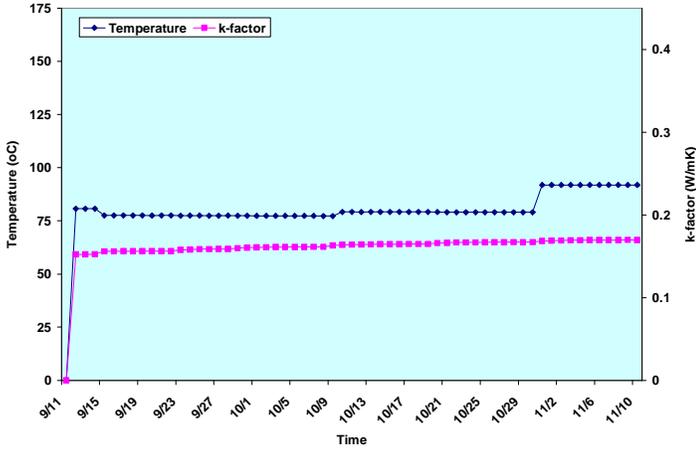
Furthermore, the SSV can test for cool down time and provide accurate, real time measurements of creep to evaluate long term reliability of the insulation. The heating system provides precise temperature control to ensure accuracy and a high capacity chiller provides a water temperature of 4 – 6°C (40 - 43°F).

The testing schedule can be adjusted to accommodate customer requirements. Qualified technical staff will be on-site and third party inspectors will validate test results for clients.

**DATA FROM SSV TESTING**

The figures below illustrate typical responses of an insulated pipe system during simulated service testing. The system included a 273 mm (10'') OD steel pipe of wall thickness 16 mm (0.63'') coated with 50 mm (2'') of ShawCor's new Thermotite® ULTRA™ insulation coating.





The compressive creep curves generated over time are important for computer modeling and thermal design of solid, foamed and syntactic insulation systems for various water depths and temperatures. The increase in pressure (blue line) is planned in steps to show the elastic (immediate) and the inelastic (long term) responses of the system to the pressure changes. This allows for construction of the design model. The typical response for foam is that the material compresses over time. For a solid polymer, the material shows an immediate response that reaches a plateau after about one week.

## EVALUATING CREEP AND COMPRESSION

SSV testing is performed to evaluate the long term creep properties of thermal insulation systems and to estimate the service life of the coating. The initial performance is defined by the thickness of the material, the compressive modulus and the thermal conductivity. These values are readily determined in laboratory tests, and the initial U Value is calculated for any given geometry and material composition, as follows:

$$U = \frac{1}{A \times R \times \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{\ln(R_{i+1} / R_i)}{k_i}} \quad (1)$$

Under operating conditions, the coating is placed under a thermo/mechanical load which alters the coating's thickness, resistance to compression, and therefore its thermal conductivity. For thick coatings (>25.4 mm or 1"), there is a substantial temperature gradient through the coating thickness (hottest on the inside and coldest on the outside) which produces a corresponding gradient of compressive strengths and thermal conductivities. These are best modeled using laboratory data for compressive strength and thermal conductivity as a function of temperature, and resolved with Finite Element Analysis (FEA) techniques.

In FEA modeling, the temperature profile in the system is described using the following heat transfer equations:

$$\begin{cases} \rho c_p \frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = -k \nabla^2 T \\ T(0, r) = T_0 \quad (r_i < r < r_o) \\ T|_{r=r_i} = T_{op}, \quad \frac{\partial T}{\partial r} \Big|_{r=r_o} = h(T - T_{condition}) / k \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

The strain and stress distribution due to hydraulic pressure and the thermal stress when the pipe is tested can be simulated using the governing equations:

$$\begin{cases} \frac{\partial \sigma_r}{\partial r} + \frac{\partial \sigma_{rz}}{\partial z} + \frac{\sigma_r}{r} = 0 \\ \frac{\partial \sigma_{rz}}{\partial r} + \frac{\partial \sigma_z}{\partial z} + \frac{\sigma_{rz}}{r} = 0 \\ \varepsilon_r = \frac{\partial u}{\partial r}, \varepsilon_\theta = \frac{u}{r}, \varepsilon_z = \frac{\partial w}{\partial z}, \varepsilon_{rz} = \frac{\partial u}{\partial z} + \frac{\partial w}{\partial r} \\ \varepsilon_i = \frac{1}{E}(\sigma_i - \nu \sigma_j - \nu \sigma_k) + \alpha \Delta T, \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Creep is mechanical deformation resulting from the composite effects of time, temperature and mechanical load. Initial performance and creep response are significantly affected by initial compositional properties such as crystallinity in crystalline polymer and foam structure where applicable. These properties are heavily dependant on initial processing conditions.

Creep can be measured for homogenous materials in a triaxial creep test, which determines the specific material dependant deformation as a function of time, temperature and pressure; however, these samples are not representative of insulation comprising multiple materials and layers. Measurements are not simply additive since their relative thermal and mechanical properties are interdependent.

The creep characteristics are determined by the creep test and described as:

$$\varepsilon_c = A \sigma^m t^n \quad (4)$$

The above relationship will be further verified by the SSV test and applied to the FEA modeling.

## PREDICTING PERFORMANCE

Creep performance of a full scale, insulated pipe cannot be accurately predicted from FEA models alone. The best estimate of creep behaviour is the result of comparing FEA models with the actual performance of a full scale installed pipe from an SSV test. The difference between the FEA model and SSV

estimates provides a measure of uncertainty (variance), which can then be used to generate predictive confidence limits around the service life of the pipe.

From laboratory test data, an FEA model can be generated that predicts thermal and mechanical properties of the insulation based on coating thickness. Triaxial creep tests can be used to predict changes in thickness as a function of time, temperature and pressure. The combination of the triaxial data with the FEA model will then generate a second FEA model which can predict long term changes in thermal and mechanical properties due to creep. Confidence limits around these predictions are caused by variances in:

- laboratory data
- triaxial creep tests
- SSV test data

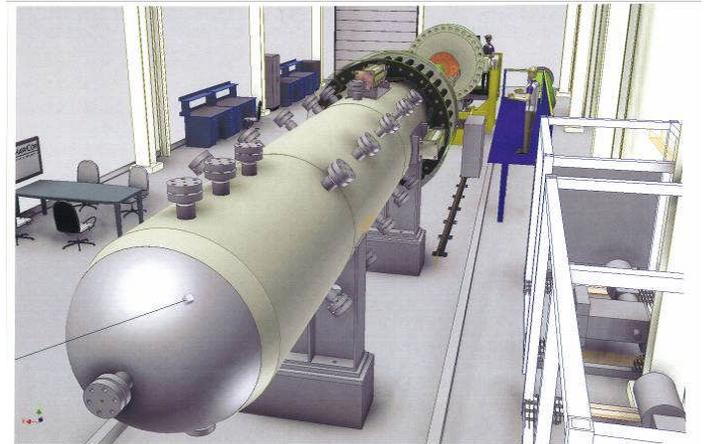
The FEA model will then be compared to the SSV test data collected on commercial size insulated pipe. Consideration of the pipe to pipe variance will be established using process capability studies and quality control (QC) data gathered during product development. This pipe to pipe variance, combined with the deviations between FEA predicted results and SSV test data will establish confidence intervals around the performance of all pipes manufactured under the specified production conditions.

The determination of confidence intervals should lead to a more accurate prediction of the long term performance of the coating. Furthermore, this methodology should yield far more reliable predictions for untested conditions than predictions using only an FEA model because estimates of uncertainty establish confidence thresholds which a mathematical model alone cannot.

ShawCor is uniquely positioned to apply this analytical process with the commissioning of a new SSV facility. The precise measurement capabilities and capacity of the vessel allow detailed characterization of initial performance and promise accurate real time measures of continuous creep and thermal conductivity available for full scale testing. In addition, the close proximity of the SSV facility to ShawCor's research and development laboratories provides direct access to laboratory testing according to specific requirements. Finally, access to global production records and QC data permits much broader interpretation of results, especially as SSV data is collected over time.

In the short term, the combination of SSV test data, laboratory material testing and the analytical methodology described above will allow ShawCor to establish the most reliable predictors of long term performance available in the market. This is particularly important for finding novel material and design solutions for challenging deep sea environments, and demanding performance validations from our customers.

The long term objective is to discover and exploit synergies between material and design properties which will significantly improve the performance of subsea products.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the management of ShawCor for permission to publish this paper.

## REFERENCES

1. J. Lienhard IV and J. Lienhard V, A Heat Transfer Text Book, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., Cambridge, MA, Phlogiston Press, 2006
2. Benjamin T.A. Chang, Han Jiang, Hung-jue Sue, Dennis Wong, Al Kehr, Meghan Mallozzi, Disbondment Mechanism of 3LPE Pipeline Coatings, 17th International Conference on Pipeline Protection, Edinburgh, UK: 17-19 October 2007
3. J.Betten, Creep Mechanics, 2nd Edition, Garman, Springer, 2004